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FOLLOWING THE CONQUISTADORES

A sense of thoroughness, accuracy of fact, deep research, and splendid historical proportion and perspective mark three valuable works on South America written by the Rev. Dr. Zahm, C.S.C.¹ Indeed we may say that a writer has at last been found in the person of Dr. Zahm who, through indefatigable labor, judicial mind, and deep sympathy, as well as the broadest literary scholarship, has succeeded within the compass of 1,456 pages in giving us a complete study of Latin America. His trilogy, which may well take the general title *Following the Conquistadores*, will be ranked among the most comprehensive and satisfying works that have appeared so far dealing with the history, civilization, and progress—religious, social, and political—of the South American Republics.

Let us say at the outset that no traveler or student can hope to do justice to the genius and work of a people or to their tendencies and ideals, as bodied forth in their culture and civilization and revealed in their moral and social life, unless he breaks with predilections and racial traditions and substitutes in their place the fullest sympathy and truth. South America and its people have been described to us in so many unsatisfactory ways by the narrow-visioned and superficial tourist or by the prepossessed traveler, who, heretofore, has seen everything in this heroic and romantic land through glasses adjusted to his sight in the cottage of his birth, that we eagerly give a welcome to the plain and impartial truth of the facts. Of course there are travelers and travelers. Without the gift of comparison one cannot very well reach values. The traveler or observer may be honest, but his scholarship and experience may be too limited to give value to his judgments. He may, too, be constitutionally dishonest, keeping his prejudices on tap as a sweet beverage

¹ *Up the Orinoco and Down the Magdalena*, by H. J. Mozans, A.M., Ph.D. (Illustrated.) New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1910; *Along the Andes and Down the Amazon*, by H. J. Mozans, A.M., Ph.D. With an Introduction by Col. Theodore Roosevelt. (Illustrated.) New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911; *Through South America's Southland*, with an account of the Roosevelt Scientific Expedition to South America. By Rev. J. A. Zahm, C.S.C., Ph.D. (H. J. Mozans.) Sixty-five Illustrations. New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1916.

to allay his racial or religious thirst. Sooner or later, however, truth will reach the public mind and all misrepresentation of fact will be detected. For nothing creates such suspicion in a jury of world readers as the wholesale indictment of a people. The civilization of a people in its registration and appraisalment is in no instance a certain or fixed thing but is always relative, depending upon the point of view and upon the standard of valuation. Full allowance must in every instance be made for race characteristics and for the sliding and shifting values of racial qualities.

It is evident that Dr. Zahm has traveled through South America, as the French say, *avec les yeux grand ouverts*. He did not flit from city to city, from capital to capital, and then patch together, hurriedly, hearsays and impressions in a picturesque mosaic intended to entertain the fancy of those who live on fairy tales. He knew that if he would indeed gain a knowledge—an intimate knowledge, of South America and its people, such knowledge as would warrant him in offering it to the world as a contribution dealing with the Latin civilization planted in the New World and developed in the centuries following the Discovery of America, he must make a prolonged stay in, and study of, the various countries where the Spanish Conquistador in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries set up the standard of his sovereign and established a new order and form of government among these ancient peoples whose historical beginnings are lost in the mists and legends and myths of time. It must be added, too, that Dr. Zahm went to South America well prepared and well equipped for the task which he undertook to perform. Opportunity was given him, in company with his distinguished companion, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, to gain access to representative South American statesmen, captains of industry, Governors of States, illustrious prelates and brilliant publicists. He visited, too, leading institutions of learning and thus gained a first hand knowledge of the intellectual *niveau* of the people. With a desire to tell the truth about South America as he saw it and found it, Dr. Zahm spent, in all, nearly three years following the Conquistadores and the scenes of their heroic labors, now in Brazil, now in Uruguay, now in Argentina, now in Chile, now in Peru, now in Colombia, and now in Venezuela.

It is no wonder, then, that in these three volumes devoted to

South America and its people, Dr. Zahm has given us a deep and accurate grasp of the civilization, culture and development of our Latin neighbors dwelling in those lands where flow the majestic Amazon, the silver-crested La Plata and the expanding tides of the Magdalena and Orinoco. But perhaps what makes Dr. Zahm's works on South America of greatest value is the light which he throws on the moral and intellectual life of its people. We read nothing in his pages of the alleged abject immorality of the South American people, nothing of the oft-repeated charges made by reckless, itinerant, evangelical missionaries from the North against the Catholic clergy. Inferentially, we have the moral side of South America touched upon by Dr. Zahm in the following paragraph found in his chapter entitled: *Among the Progressive Paulistas*, in which he deals with the people of the city of Sao Paulo, in Brazil: "One cannot fail," our author says, "to be impressed by the large families one meets in the city of Sao Paulo. It is no uncommon thing to find them comprising ten or twelve or even more children. The birth rate is nearly thirty-six per thousand. This is almost twice as great as that of London and shows that race-suicide is not making the terrible ravage here that it does in many of the great cities of Europe and the United States. More impressive still is the fact that the birth rate is more than double the death rate—something which can be said of few cities of this size. The mortality of the city varies between seventeen and twenty per thousand."² We think it may be assumed that nearly all these children are the legitimate offspring of marriages blessed by the Church; and even if a small percentage were born outside of wedlock, the moral condition would still be better than that which obtains in many of the great cities of Europe and the United States where race-suicide is so prevalent and so common that many old families are becoming extinct and governments are growing alarmed at the lack of increase in the population.

It is generally observed as an axiomatic fact that, wherever the influence of the Catholic Church most prevails, there the moral condition of the people as evidenced in the birth rate is best and most satisfactory. Take for instance the France of our day and it will be found that in Brittany and the French Pyrenees, where the Catholic people follow implicitly the teaching

² *Through South America's Southland*, p. 93.

of the Church, there is but little race-suicide, as evidenced by the birth rate.

When we turn to consider the intellectual status of South American countries, Dr. Zahm leaves us in no doubt whatever. A distinguished scholar himself, not in one but in many departments of knowledge—science, philosophy, literature, language, history, archaeology and ethnology, Dr. Zahm is able to give us the judgments and conclusions, not of a narrow-visioned and dogmatic pedant, but rather the judgments and conclusions of a broad and sympathetic scholar. We learn from Dr. Zahm's three valuable works that ample provision for primary, secondary, and higher education exists in almost all the South American countries. Not only does the State support State Universities and secondary and primary schools, but the Catholic Church, true to her mission and tradition, builds everywhere Seminaries and Academies, seeking out religious vocations and training young men and women fittingly for the altar and the cloister, for good citizenship, and for the great work of Christian charity in the home.

Referring, for instance, to the educational facilities of Colombia, Dr. Zahm writes: "There were at one time no fewer than twenty-three Colleges in New Granada (Colombia). The first of these was founded in 1554 for the education of the Indians. The following year another was established for the benefit of Spanish orphans and mestizos. In one of the Colleges was a special chair for the study of the Muisca language. The Royal and Pontifical University began its existence in 1627—thirteen years before the foundation of Harvard College. In 1653, Archbishop Cristobal de Torres founded the celebrated College del Rosario which, by reason of its munificent endowments, was able to render such splendid service to the cause of education, and was long recognized as the leading institution of learning in New Granada."³ It was also in New Granada that the first astronomical observatory was established in America. The city of Bogota is known as the Athens of South America. Dr. Zahm refers to the great number of public and private libraries in this city and tells us that on account of the many secondhand book stores in Bogota, he fancied himself back again among the bookshops of Florence, Leipsic or Paris.

³ *Up the Orinoco and Down the Magdalena*, p. 301.

American scholars sometimes speak slightly of the degrees won in South American Universities, but of one thing we have been assured: that the degree of Doctor of Laws, conferred by a reputable University in South America, entails more study, more research, and a wider culture than does the same degree in the Department of Law in any North American University. Practically, the student in the North American University may be more solidly grounded in the mere knowledge of law, but he lacks the breadth and culture of his brother in South America. No doubt the conditions and ideals that obtain in these two portions of the continent are responsible for the difference. Spanish tradition in the South emphasizes literary and historical knowledge and makes of rhetoric an important thing, while, in the North, precedent and fact and cold, cogent reasoning take first place.

With the expulsion of the Jesuits, South America lost its ablest educators and not a few of its most learned men.

Perhaps, among South American countries, Argentina may be said to take the lead in things educational. Chile is a good second. The Argentine Government is alive to the need of maintaining a system of education which will train a highly intelligent citizenship and afford every child in the country a means and an opportunity of being well educated. Between the ages of six and fourteen, primary education in Argentina is compulsory and gratuitous. The entire number of children of school age in the republic in 1909 amounted to 1,200,212. Secondary education in Argentina may also be said to be almost gratuitous. In the larger cities are to be found sixteen Lyceums and thirty-five Normal Schools. Argentina has five Universities: the University of Buenos Aires, that of Cordoba founded in 1612, the National University of La Plata, and the two provincial Universities of Santa Fe and Paraná. The University of Cordoba is in proud possession of illustrious traditions. The historic old city of Cordoba itself is known as *La Ciudad docta*—the learned city. Dr. Zahm points out that, as it was once said of the old university town of Bologna, *Bologna docet*, because of the thousands of students who flocked to her classic halls from all parts of Europe, so it may be said of Cordoba—*Cordoba docet* (Cordoba teaches). And this is particularly true when one considers the number of earnest and learned instructors found in the University and Convent Schools of this venerable home of letters and culture.

It would seem that the Republic of Brazil is one of two or three countries in South America which do not possess a University. This is indeed difficult to understand, for its needs of higher education are pressing. As a Republic, its citizens must be educated to realize their responsibilities, and to bring to the administration of affairs the greatest intelligence and highest capacity; and these must be sought for through the gift and bestowal of higher education. It is true that many of the most promising and ambitious young men of Brazil pursue University studies in the United States and in Europe; but this cannot entirely satisfy the needs of a democracy where opportunity is or should be open to all, irrespective of wealth or family, and where everyone is on an equal civic footing.

In his chapter: *South America's City Beautiful*, Dr. Zahm refers to the absence of a University in Brazil in the following terms: "Rio de Janeiro is fairly well provided with primary and secondary schools and with professional and technical institutions of various kinds. But what is most astonishing for a city as large and as wealthy as the capital of Brazil is that it has no University. And more astonishing still is the fact that there is not and never has been a single University in the vast Republic. In this respect, Brazil is far behind the other nations of Latin America for, with one or two exceptions, they can all point to their University and some of them to several institutions of this character. One needs instance only such homes of learning as the University of Cordoba in Argentina, the Universities of Santiago, Quito, Bogota, and the venerable and far famed University of San Marcos in Lima."⁴ As to the scholarship and intellectual capacity of Brazilians, Dr. Zahm has this to say: "For an evidence of their scholarship and intellectual capacity, it is not necessary to inquire about their past achievements in literature and science. It suffices to glance through the pages of some of their leading magazines, several of which are beautifully illustrated, or to read the masterly articles in some of the daily papers of Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, instance only such dailies as *Jornal do Commercio*, *O Paiz*, and *Jornal do Brazil*. The first named journal was founded in 1827 and is by far the best and most important news organ in Brazil. Not only that, but there are few newspapers in the United States or Europe which are

⁴ *Through South America's Southland*, Chap. iv, pp. 67, 69.

better edited, or more dignified, or which make a greater and a more successful effort to supply their readers with the news of the world. In it appear articles from the pens of the greatest literary lights of Brazil—articles which are frequently exquisite specimens of Portuguese literature and conclusive proofs of the capabilities of expression of the noble language of Camoens and Nogueira Ramos.”⁵

We have already stated that, next to Argentina, Chile has given greater impetus to higher education than any other country in South America. In truth, the material and intellectual progress of this Republic has been most marked during the past few years. Dr. Zahm, after paying a well-merited tribute to the character of the work done in the National University of Chile and to the organizing gifts of its great rector, Don Andres Bello, whose scholarly works on literature, philosophy and jurisprudence have given him a just right to be considered among the most illustrious names in South American history, refers in the following complimentary terms to the work done by the Catholic Church in higher education in the city of Santiago, Chile: “But the National University is not the only institution for higher education in Chile that deserves special notice. I should ignore one of Chile’s noblest homes of learning if I did not bear witness to the splendid work being done in the great *Universidad Catolica* which, thanks to the munificence of a number of wealthy Chileans, was founded in 1888 by the late Archbishop of Santiago, Don Mariano Casanova. Its magnificent buildings, which are unsurpassed by any of the numerous and superb educational structures in South America, are among the most imposing edifices in the National Capital. Its teaching corps is composed of eminent men in every department. Many of them are distinguished professors from Europe. . . . But I must say that the institution which I examined with most pleasure was the ecclesiastical Seminary. The building, which is very large, is surrounded by enchanting beds of flowers and inviting groves of umbrageous trees and is an ideal place of study for young aspirants to the priesthood. And the course of study in this institution is not only thorough but is admirably adapted to equip the young priests for their divers and important duties in the world as parish priests, missionaries and educators.”⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-91.

It will be seen, therefore, that not only does the State, in nearly every instance, make ample provision for the maintenance of primary schools, secondary schools and higher institutions of learning in most of the South American countries, but the Church also supplements all this with a splendid system of Schools, Academies and Colleges where the things of the soul and the moral welfare of the State may not be forgotten amid the over-crowding materialistic spirit of our day. What appears to us passing strange is that people of North America should know so little about the intellectual progress of our brothers to the south, so little of the toil and genius and heroic achievement of a people who had planted the standard of faith and civilization among Araucanians and Incas long years before any settlement had been made at Jamestown in Virginia or before the Pilgrim Fathers had landed at Plymouth Rock.

These three admirable works of Dr. Zahm will assuredly do much to arouse interest in South America as well as help to dissipate the ignorance and remove from the mind of many the false ideas that have long obtained, even among scholars, as to the character, progress and development of the South American Republics.

An interesting phase or expression of intellectual life in South America is revealed in its press. In truth the newspapers and periodicals of a country register in no uncertain manner the intellectual status of the people. Dr. Zahm notes closely and carefully this expression of South American life. We have already instanced the tribute which our author has meted out to the press of Rio de Janeiro, declaring that there are few newspapers, either in the United States or Europe, which are better edited than the *Jornal do Commercio* of that city. Referring to the press of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, Dr. Zahm writes: "The number of newspapers published in Bogotá is surprising—more than there are in Boston or Philadelphia."⁷ But Dr. Zahm adds that their circulation is necessarily limited. Buenos Aires has an able press, the *Prensa* or *Press*, which is perhaps the largest newspaper in the Latin world. It occupies what is said to be the finest newspaper building in existence. In truth, the press of Buenos Aires will compare favorably with that of London or New York.

⁷ *Up the Orinoco and Down the Magdalena*, p. 303.

Now turn we for a moment to a consideration of the ethnological side of South America. Dr. Zahm has touched upon this as only a scholar could. Not only has he discussed the primitive races of the country, but he has dealt with the characteristics of the early Spanish colonizers, conquerors, and builders of cities, as well as the more recent arrivals from Italy, Germany, England, Ireland, Austria and France. We learn from Dr. Zahm that the Argentine racial type will eventually be Caucasian, for, unlike some of the other South American countries, Argentina, like Uruguay, is noted for the predominance of the white race. But Dr. Zahm adds: "The truth is that the definitive type of Argentina is still in the making. What it will eventually be after the peoples of the various nationalities, which now compose the population of the Republic, have thoroughly blended, it is difficult to predict. The process of fusion will naturally be less difficult than in Brazil where there is such a large proportion of the black and red races. In Argentina there are now but few Indians outside of the Gran Chaco and Patagonia while the negro is quite a negligible factor. . . . In the eyes of the law, all who are born in the country, as well as naturalized immigrants, are citizens of Argentina, but these are as different from the representatives of the old families as are our latest arrivals from Sicily and Russia from the descendants of the first colonists of Virginia, Maryland or New England."⁸ But, out of this melting pot of races in South America, Dr. Zahm is confident a type will come that will reveal what is best in each contributing race. Dr. Zahm expresses his opinion in these words: "What will be the resultant type of this fusion of Argentine Spaniard and Italian, we can only surmise. For as yet we are without the necessary data for determining the effect of blood admixture on national character or the influence of heredity and environment on a population composed of several different elements like those in question. That the type will exhibit the best and most prominent traits of the component peoples, there is every reason to believe. That it will possess the practical intelligence of the Spaniard, the individual energy of the Italian, the ardent and jubilant patriotism of the Argentine, the spirit of enterprise, the optimism, the civic idealism of all these three combined, there can be little doubt. That Argentina, after this fusion of peoples who have

⁸ *Through South America's Southland*, pp. 196-97.

given to the world a Cervantes, a Murillo, a Calderon, a Dante, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Columbus, a Galileo, a San Martin, will eventually take a prominent place in literature, art, science and statesmanship, seems assured.”⁹

Perhaps the most valuable chapter in Dr. Zahm’s three volumes is the one bearing the title: *Battle-grounds and Achievements of the Conquistadores of the Cross*. In this chapter, our author deals with early missionary labors in South America. In this, too, he touches upon the attitude and policy of Spain towards the Indian and the beneficent labors of the Catholic Church in its missions in South America in prosecuting the great work of civilizing, teaching and christianizing the aborigine. Referring to Spain’s mission among the Indians, Dr. Zahm says: “The Spanish national conscience recognized the obligation of civilizing and christianizing the Indians, a task which Spaniards finally accomplished. This is manifest everywhere in Spanish America, where, even in the larger towns and cities, Indians and half-castes constitute a majority of the population. And the process of amalgamation that was begun in the first days of the conquest still continues, and the mixed race resulting from the intermarriage of whites and Indians is daily rising in civilization and culture and influence.”¹⁰

We have not as yet touched upon the political status or the character of government which obtains in South America. The instability of government in South American republics and the constantly recurring revolutions which have marked their history during past years might give one the impression that a stable and secure government is an impossibility in the land of the Southern Cross. But a new era has set in. Peace and good will and mutual trust have taken the place of national enmity, bitterness and jealousy, and the magnificent statue, “Cristo Redentor” (Christ the Redeemer), outlined against the sky on one of the lofty peaks of the Andes near the Chilean frontier, is a covenant and pledge of lasting peace between two of the most enlightened and progressive countries in this great and growing Southland. Fitting, therefore, it was that Col. Theodore Roosevelt, one of the most distinguished of American citizens, while the guest of the President of Uruguay, should explain the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

¹⁰ *Along the Andes and down the Amazon*, p. 451.

peaceful purpose of the Monroe doctrine in regard to the South American republics by saying that, "as soon as any country of the New World stands on a sufficiently high footing of orderly liberty and achieved success of self-respecting strength, it becomes a guarantor of the doctrine on a footing of complete equality."¹¹

We regard Dr. Zahm's three volumes, to which we have given the general title, *Following the Conquistadores*, as the most valuable contribution which has yet been made to a history of the South American republics.

THOMAS O'HAGAN, PH.D., LL.D.

¹¹ *Through South America's Southland*, p. 143.